

County Profile: Union

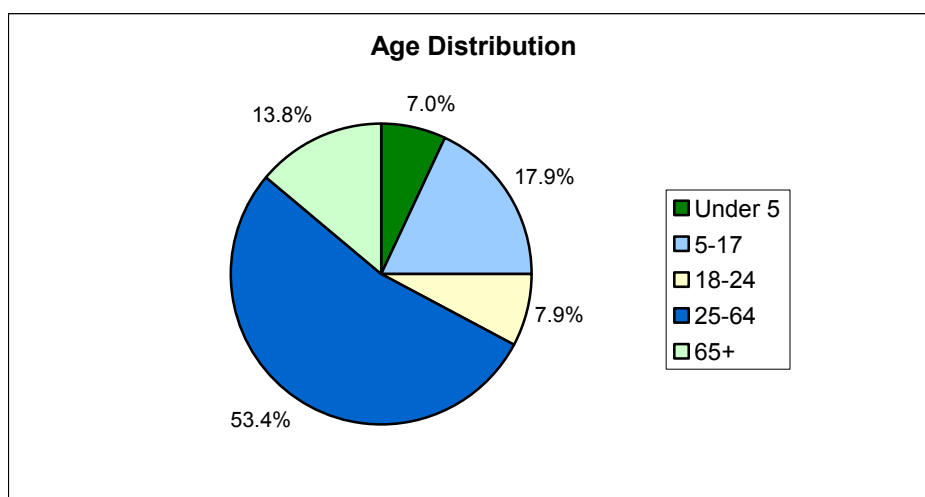


General Demographics

According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 522,541 individuals reside in Union County's 21 municipalities. These individuals are spread out over a land area of 103.29 square miles, which translates into a population density of 5,059 persons per square mile. This makes Union County the 6th most populous of the state's 21 counties, and the third most densely populated county in the state.

At 5.8%, Union County grew less from 1990 to 2000 than all but three other counties. Five municipalities experienced reductions in their population over the past decade, and growth in the other municipalities was modest, ranging from 0.8% for Fanwood Borough (total 2000 population – 7,174) to 9.6% for Elizabeth, the county's largest municipality, with a population of 120,568.

Union County has 129,941 children under the age of 18. They comprise 24.9% of the county's total population and 6.2% of the state's child population. Approximately 61% of Union County residents are of working age (18 through 64), and 13.8% are 65 years and older. In its age distribution, Union County closely resembles the state as a whole.



Child Welfare

Union County's portion of statewide child abuse and neglect referrals is less than the proportion of children residing in the county. While 6.2% of all children in New Jersey reside in Union County, 4.7%, or 1,832 of the child abuse and neglect referrals are generated there. The patterns of abuse and neglect differ somewhat from the state pattern. Compared to statewide percentages, a greater proportion of Union County referrals were made for both physical and sexual abuse and a smaller percentage of the referrals were for neglect. The percent of substantiated referrals is the third highest in the state.

Child Abuse and Neglect Referrals in 2001

	Union County		New Jersey	
	N	%	N	%
Physical abuse	691	37.7	12,382	32.0
Emotional abuse	12	0.7	330	0.9
Sexual	140	7.6	2,179	5.6
Neglect	919	50.2	22,099	57.1
Multiple types	70	3.8	1,716	4.4
<i>Total</i>	1,832	---	38,706	---
Substantiated rate per 1,000 children	3.7	---	4.0	---
Percent substantiated	26.1	---	21.8	---

In the two Union County District Offices, the active DYFS caseload is 3,809 children and 2,044 families. There are 489 in-state foster homes in Union County. There are 686 Union County children in foster care, which is 8.8% of the 7,807 children in foster care in New Jersey and more than the percentage of children residing in this county. Of the Union County children in foster care, 56.9% reside in a different county than their family, which is higher than the out-of-county statewide average of 44.6%.

From 1998 to 2002, six children in Union County died as a result of abuse and neglect out of a statewide total of 123. Three of the families of these children had an open/active case with DYFS at the time of their death. The number of all infants who died in Union County in 2000 was 49, 6.8% of the 723 infant deaths occurring in the state. The infant mortality rate of 6.3 deaths under the age of 1 per 1,000 live births was the same as the statewide rate.

Child Welfare Outcome Measures

Information on various child welfare outcomes for Union County is presented in the following table. The data show a number of positive outcomes for children in foster care in Union County. The incidence of abuse and neglect as well as the recurrence of maltreatment in foster care are well below the national standards (.29% vs. .57% for the incidence of abuse and neglect; 2.6% vs. 6.1% for the recurrence of maltreatment).

Compared to the national standard of 8.6%, a smaller percentage of children in foster care in Union County re-enter care within 12 months of a prior placement.¹

At the same time, there are areas where Union County does not meet the national standard. A substantially smaller percentage of children are reunified with a parent or caretaker within 12 months (47.9%) compared to the national standard (76.2%). Also, the percentage of cases exiting foster care for adoption is much lower than the national standard (11.1% compared to 32%).

2001 Child Welfare Outcome Measures by County

	Union County	State	National Standard
Recurrence of maltreatment	2.6%	6.4%	6.1% or less
A/N incidence in foster care	.29%	.78%	.57% or less
Reunify within 12 months without increasing re-entry	47.9%	59.5%	76.2% or more
Re-enter care within 12 months	7.7%	8.2%	8.6% or less
Reduce time in foster care to adoption	11.1%	16.3%	32.0% or more
Increase placement stability	86.9%	86.2%	86.7% or more

Note. Data supplied by DYFS

Definitions

Reduce recurrence of maltreatment – of children who were victims of substantiated or indicated child abuse and/or neglect during the first six months of the reporting period, the percentage who had another substantiated or indicated report within a six-month period.

A/N incidence in foster care – of children who were in foster care during the reporting period, the percentage that was the subject of a substantiated or indicated maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff member.

Reunify within 12 months without increasing re-entry – of children reunified with parents or caretakers at time of discharge from foster care, the percentage reunified within 12 months.

Re-enter care within 12 months – of children who entered foster care during the reporting period, the percentage that re-entered care within 12 months of leaving foster care episode.

Reduce time in foster care to adoption – of all children who exited foster care to adoption, the percentage who exited within 24 months.

Increase placement stability – of all children who had been in foster care less than 12 months, the percentage who had no more than two placement settings during that time period.

¹ See definitions that follow for detailed descriptions of the categories presented in this table.

Data Sources

DYFS Approved Foster Homes File, 8/4/03
DYFS Caseload Activity Report (DAR-SISM-5), 8/1/03
DYFS, Child Abuse and Neglect in New Jersey Statistical Report for 2000
DYFS Child Abuse and Neglect in New Jersey Statistical Report for 2001
DYFS Foster Care File Extract, 6/6/03
DYFS Statewide Summary of Foster Homes (DAR-PCISM-1), 7/4/03
NJ Substantiated Abuse and Neglect Child Fatality Analysis for 1998-2002, July 2003
U.S. Census Bureau, Census 1990
U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Redistricting Data Summary File, Population for the Counties and Municipalities in New Jersey: 1990 and 2000 (PL1)
U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 1, Geographic Comparison Table, Age and Sex (GCT-P5)
U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 1, Geographic Comparison Table, Population, Housing Units, Area and Density (GCT-PH1-R)
U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Summary File 1, Quick Table, QT-P2.
U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000, Demographic Profiles, Profile of General Demographic Characteristics (DP-1)

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